

State Growth

New Bridgewater Bridge

FACT SHEET

History of the River Derwent crossing at Bridgewater

The River Derwent crossing between Bridgewater and Granton has a long history as an important transport route for ferries, vehicles and trains.

Work to build the causeway started in 1830, and by 1848 construction was underway to build the first bridge connecting the causeway with Bridgewater.

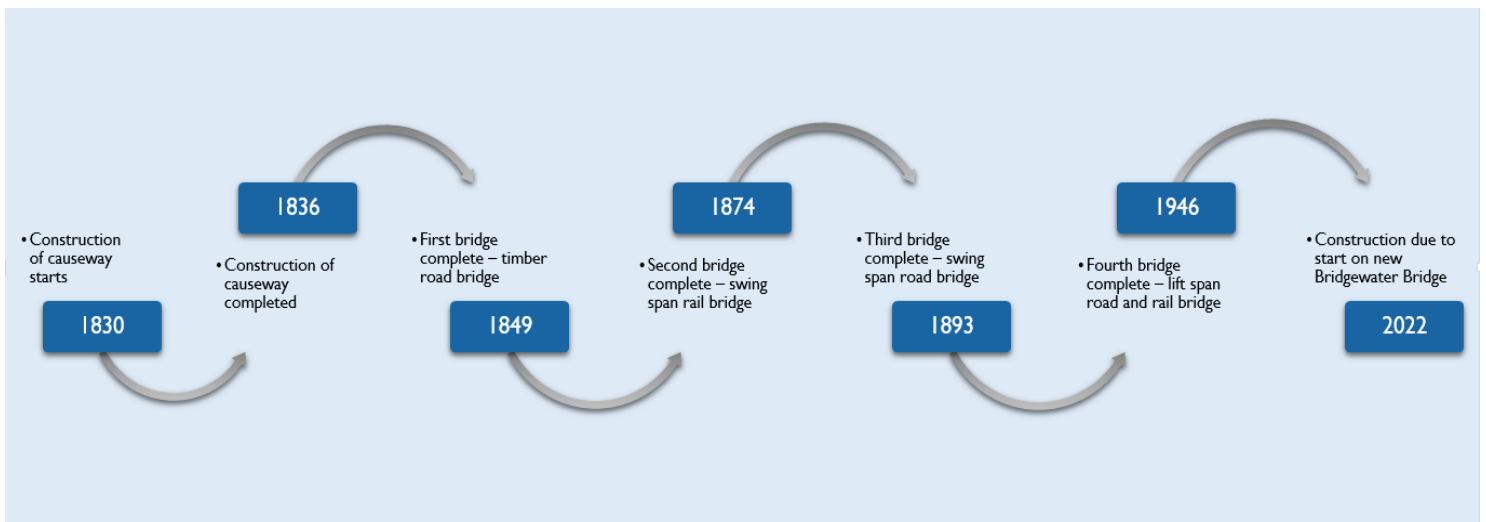
In 1849 the first road bridge was completed, with an adjacent separate rail bridge built in 1874.

Planning for the existing combined road and rail bridge started in 1933 and was completed, with an operational lifting span, 13 years later.

Road and rail remained separated until October 1946 when the railway was diverted onto the new bridge and the two operated continuously on the same structure for the first time.

Rail services used the bridge until the Brighton Transport Hub opened in 2014 and trains were no longer required to transport goods to Hobart.

Concept designs and project objectives for a new Bridgewater Bridge developed in 2010 as part of the *Bridgewater Bridge Replacement Planning Study* consequently did not include provision for a railway on the new structure.



Planning for a new Bridgewater Bridge

Building a new Bridgewater Bridge will strengthen Tasmania's National Highway and deliver a more reliable journey for the thousands of people who travel across the bridge and on surrounding roads each day.

Planning for the new bridge has been ongoing for a number of years and has progressed quickly since 2019.

In early 2020, the Tasmanian Government confirmed a set of design requirements to guide the development of designs for the new bridge.

While including rail infrastructure on the new bridge fell outside the scope and budget of the Project, the design requirements specify that the new bridge must not obstruct the existing rail corridor, ensuring that it can be used in the future if needed.



The non-operational rail line on the Granton foreshore.

Building a new bridge

For 140 years, between 1874 and 2014, rail crossed the River Derwent using the existing causeway and a swing span and then lifting span bridge between the end of the causeway and Bridgewater.

These mechanical bridges have allowed boats to move up and down the river, but they interrupt traffic on the National Highway and can be unreliable and costly to maintain.

The new Bridgewater Bridge will be a fixed structure with a minimum 45 metre-wide and 16.2 metre (AHD) high clearance over the navigation channel.

While this will provide seamless travel for vehicles over the bridge and boats under the bridge, the incline would be too steep for trains.

Catering for rail is not as simple as attaching tracks onto the side of the new bridge as trains need an alignment with shallower slopes, wider curves and different load capacities than roads built for cars and trucks.

The history of the River Derwent crossing shows that trains have successfully operated on a structure separate from the road bridge in the past, and could do so again.

What about the future?

A modern, safe and efficient swing span or lift span bridge is one option that could be used between the end of the causeway and Bridgewater if rail were to be reintroduced across the River Derwent in the future.

A purpose-built structure smaller and lighter than the existing dual road and rail bridge could be built to accommodate rail, and could be lifted intermittently in line with train schedules, ensuring that disruption to boats travelling up and down the river would be minimised.